

FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Serving the community of Fort Leavenworth, Kan., for more than 35 years

USDA introduces area housing initiative

by Bob Kerr, Command Information Officer

A meeting Aug. 29 at the Frontier Conference Center laid the groundwork for a program that may help many Fort Leavenworth Soldiers and their families become home owners.

The first meeting of the Fort Leavenworth Regional Initiative of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development agency was attended by more than 100 area business people with a stake in the local real estate market. The businesses included bankers and mortgage lenders, home builders and developers, real estate agents, and representatives from non-profit and faith-based organizations.

"We are very impressed with the interest and enthusiasm shown during (the Aug. 29) regional meeting," said USDA Rural Development

State Director Chuck Banks. "Growth opportunities in the Fort Leavenworth area will provide communities in the area an excellent opportunity to improve affordable housing opportunities and enhance local infrastructure. USDA Rural Development looks forward to partnering with Fort Leavenworth to help areas realize important community and economic development opportunities."

The Fort Leavenworth Regional Initiative is an outgrowth of USDA Rural Development's Fort Riley Regional Initiative, which was created to assist Kansas communities affected by the Base Realignment and Closure process, Banks said.

"This has been tremendously successful at Fort Riley," Banks said. "We broke \$6 million (in homeownership loans to Soldiers) last week at Fort Riley."

Like Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth is due to gain personnel as a result of the latest BRAC action. USDA Rural Development is also looking to help the area around the Kansas Army Ammunition Plant in Labette County in southeastern Kansas, which BRAC has slated for closure.

"We're looking forward to helping them develop the 16,000-plus acre area," Banks said.

Also attending the meeting were members and representatives from the Kansas Congressional delegation.



U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks briefs Garrison Commander Col. Timothy Weathersbee, governmental staff and community members about the USDA-Fort Leavenworth Regional Initiative before moving into break-out sessions Aug. 29 at the Frontier Conference Center.

Lamp photo by Prudence Siebert.

Harold Stones, special projects officer for Sen. Pat Roberts, praised the USDA's efforts for economic development, adding, "Economic development does not come from Topeka or Washington. Economic development comes from local leadership."

U.S. Rep. Jim Ryun also attended the meeting.

"The process of BRAC was very important to Kansas," Ryun said. "We are beginning to see the results of that make the American dream of home ownership come true for more of our Soldiers."

But, according to the USDA Rural Development Kansas' Web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks/, Guaranteed Rural Housing loans are also available to civilians. A GRH loan is based on income, and features a low fixed-interest rate, no down payment and no asset requirements, among its many benefits.

USDA Rural Development's Kansas office is partnering with the Missouri office for the Fort Leavenworth Regional Initiative because of the post's location on the border between the states. Kansas counties in the initiative include Leavenworth, Doniphan, Atchison, Jefferson, Douglas, Johnson and Wyandotte. On the Missouri side, Platte, Buchanan, Clinton, Clay and Jackson counties are included.

More information and application forms are available from the Web site www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks/ or by calling the USDA Rural Development regional office in Oskaloosa, Kan., at (785) 863-2587.